

Remarks:

This amendment is submitted in an earnest effort to advance this case to issue without delay.

The main claim has been replaced with a new main claim that focuses on a particularly advantageous embodiment of the instant invention and that clearly states that the instant invention is aimed at making a laminate. This embodiment of the invention is lucidly described in the original disclosure (see bottom of page 6) and shown in FIG. 2.

Before going into a detailed discussion of the art, it is important to note that the goal of the instant invention is to produce a washcloth having two primary characteristics: absorbency and durability. This is achieved according to the invention by sandwiching two tough spun-bonds treated with wetting agent to opposite faces of a layer of hydrophilic fibers, and then hydrodynamically consolidating the three layers together.

The prior-art wash cloths of similar constructions have the primary problem that they are not very rugged. Generally they either are not sufficiently bonded together so they delaminate after modest use, or they are so integrally bonded that the hydrophilic layer extends all the way to the surface where the fragile hydrophilic fibers are exposed making the cloth to shed.

With the instant invention the resultant laminate is both durable and highly absorbent. The absorbency is, of course, due to the core layer of hydrophilic fibers sandwiched between the spun-bond outer layers and also due to the treatment of the outer layers with a wetting agent. The durability is due to the fact that the surfaces are formed by these spun-bond layers that, as defined in claims 9 and 10, are made of endless synthetic-resin filaments, and that, as defined in claim 8, are hydrodynamically consolidated together and to the core fiber layer. The resultant laminate presents durable outer surfaces that are intimately bonded internally to a highly absorbent layer of hydrophilic fibers.

The claims of the US case are rejected on the combination of US 3,485,706 of Evans and 6,903,034 of Putnam.

Evans relates to a method of making fleece from fibers. Fibers or endless filaments are laid on a perforated substrate and treated with water jets at varying pressure. This reference makes passing reference to a wetting agent.

No three-layer laminate is shown or suggested in Evans, indeed in Evans the two starting layers are in large part so mixed that they cannot be referred to as laminae in the finished product, meaning that they do not form a laminate. Under no circumstances does Evans suggest sandwiching a layer of hydrophilic fibers between a pair of spun-bond laminates of endless fibers. At best Evans shows something resembling two thirds of the invention, but

the treatment just converts it into a fleece of two different fibers mixed together. It is not even a two-layer laminate.

Putnam describes spun bonds that are subjected to an expensive water-jet treatment in order to couple together the fibers of the spun bonds making up several layers. Column 14, lines 34 to 39 suggests that the finished product be given a chemical treatment, and a surfactant is mentioned. Thus in Putnam the treatment with a surfactant is of all layers, and is of the finished product.


Nothing in Putnam suggests that first a spunbond is made of endless fibers, that it is then treated with a wetting agent, that thereafter a layer of hydrophilic fiber is applied to it and another treated spunbond layer is applied atop that, with the entire three-layer sandwich then hydrodynamically consolidated. Nowhere is there the suggestion of sandwiching a hydrophilic-fiber layer between two spun-bond layers that were previously treated with a surfactant.

The three layers of the instant invention assembled as defined in new claim 8 are not seen in the references individually, making a §102 rejection on either of them impossible. Nor do they together suggest the particular three-layer laminate now clearly defined in claim 8, so a §103 rejection is similarly out of the question.

For these reasons allowance of all claims and passage to issue are in order.

If only minor problems that could be corrected by means of a telephone conference stand in the way of allowance of this case, the examiner is invited to call the undersigned to make the necessary corrections.

Respectfully submitted,  
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Enclosure: Request for extension (two months)